

of this attack [on Athlone] in the Life of James, II. 453, is an absurd romance. It does not appear to have been taken from the King's original Memoirs or to have been revised by his son.¹ Often, too, the documents printed in the Life are garbled.² On the other hand, on such a matter as the treasonable relations of some of William's ministers with the exiled king, the Life of James the Second is cited by Macaulay as an authority of the highest value.³ He also cites it to prove that James was cognisant of the plot to assassinate William in 1696.⁴

Macaulay's employment of Burnet's History and the Life of James shows that he had a just appreciation of the general value of these works, and his criticisms of certain passages show great acuteness. But compared with the modern scientific historian he treats his authorities in a rather superficial fashion. To see this it is only necessary to read the two elaborate studies on Burnet and the Life of James the Second which are contained in the appendix to Volume VI of Ranke's History of England. The German historian, before using either authority, submitted it as a whole to a minute and careful analysis in order to find out how it was put together and exactly what its value was. A rough estimate of its value is not enough: the materials must be carefully weighed and examined that

the trust-
worthiness or falsehood of any statement can
be precisely
determined. In this way alone can the greatest
measure of
certainty be obtained by the historian.
Further, the pro-
cess by which the result is arrived at must be
made public
in order that other historians may estimate the
correctness
of the process and the justice of the
conclusions. A more

¹IV, 2046 (xvii). ^a III, 1290 (x), 1480 (xii) ; V, 2608 (xxi).

³IV, 1989, 2019 (xvii) ; V, 2444 (xx).

*V, 2596, 2608 (xxi).